

OPENING WORDS

The living tradition we share draws from many sources. The second is: Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love.

CHECK-IN

READINGS

(all quotations in these readings are from *A Chosen Faith*, by John A. Buehrens and Forrest Church, Beacon Press, 1998)

We are a liberal church community which has dared not only to preach freedom but to live in freedom as well, which has not only prophesied a more just day to come but has dared to live prophetically right now. ~ Mark Belletini

Who are these Unitarian Universalists, standing around the coffee table on Sunday morning discussing last night's movie and next fall's election, reviewing the morning sermon, designing tomorrow's education, storming over next century's oceans? Joyful celebrants of the gift of life, mixing nonsense with the quest of the ages, turning secular need into concerned action, serving wine on the lawn and petitions in the foyer. ~ Betty Mills

Too much mercy can squeeze out justice, and too much attention to our better nature can blind us to the awesome human capacity for evil. ... We are born with a capacity for both good and evil, and society contributes directly to the development of our aptitude for each. ~ Forrest Church

It is in our lives, and not our words that our religion must be read. ~ Thomas Jefferson

Without the proof of deeds, good intentions and right opinions are nothing more than empty shells. ... The principal sin besetting many of us today is the sin of sophisticated resignation. ... For many of us, self-improvement (both physical and spiritual) has displaced the transformation of society as our principal moral concern. ~ Forrest Church

Is there nothing worth risking one's life for? Are there no dreams or goals so important that we risk our own destruction to gain them? ~ James Reeb

The prophetic liberal church is the church in which all members share the common responsibility to attempt to foresee the consequences of human behavior, both individual and institutional, with the intention of making history instead of merely being pushed around by it. Only through the "prophethood" of all believers can we foresee doom and mend our common ways. ~ James Luther Adams

QUESTIONS Please respond to any of the questions you feel moved to answer or any of the readings that you find to be particularly meaningful.

These questions are from session 3 of the study guide for the book *A Chosen Faith*, by John A. Buehrens and Forrest Church, at <https://www.beacon.org/Assets/ClientPages/AChosenFaithdg.aspx>

1. Given the UU traditions of emphasizing the goodness and minimizing the sinfulness of humanity, we are often accused of sidestepping the problem of evil. What is your view of sin or evil? What is the source of evil in today's world? What is your view of human nature? Are we born basically good or basically sinful?
2. How does your belief about the underlying cause of human behavior influence your response to dealing with society's problems?
3. In what ways are you guilty of what Forrest Church calls "the sin of sophisticated resignation"?

CLOSING WORDS

Unitarian Universalism is faith in people, hope for tomorrow's child, confidence in a continuity that spans all time. It looks not to a perfect heaven, but toward a good earth. It is respectful of the past, but not limited to it. It is trust in growing and conspiracy with change. It is spiritual responsibility for a moral tomorrow. ~ John Buehrens, from *A Chosen Faith*, Beacon Press, 1998

notes on people quoted

The Rev. Mark Belletini is minister of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Columbus, Ohio. He served as chair of the Hymnbook Resources Commission, which produced the 1993 UUA hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*.

- <https://www.uua.org/offices/people/mark-l-belletini>

Betty Mills, Unitarian Universalist layperson, quoted in *A Chosen Faith*, Beacon Press, 1998.

Thomas Jefferson never joined a Unitarian church. He did attend Unitarian services while visiting with Joseph Priestley after his immigration to Pennsylvania and spoke highly of those services.

- <https://uudb.org/articles/thomasjefferson.html>

James Reeb (1927-1965) was a minister, social worker, and civil rights activist. His brutal murder by segregationists while participating in the second Selma to Montgomery march made him one of the martyrs of the American civil rights movement of the 1960s.

- <https://uudb.org/articles/jamesjosephreeb.html>
- <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/river/workshop5/175806.shtml>
- <https://www.uua.org/blueboat/issues/exposing-truths-murder-rev-james-reeb>
- https://www.uua.org/files/documents/reebjames/good_mans_death.pdf

James Luther Adams (1901-1994) was a Unitarian parish minister, social activist, journal editor, prolific author, and for more than 40 years a divinity school professor. Adams was the most influential theologian among 20th-century Unitarian Universalists and one of the finest 20th-century American liberal Christian theologians.

- <https://www.uua.org/offices/people/james-luther-adams>

The Rev. Dr. F. Forrester Church (1948-2009) served the Unitarian Church of All Souls in New York City as senior minister since 1978 and as minister of public theology since 2007. He died September 24, 2009, of esophageal cancer. A frequent contributor to UU World, he is the author of many books.

- <https://www.uua.org/offices/people/forrest-church>
- <https://www.uua.org/pressroom/news/news/memoriam-rev-dr-forrest-church-theologian-author>

The Rev. John Buehrens was president of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations from 1993 to 2001. He served congregations in Tennessee, Texas, New York, Massachusetts, and California before retiring in 2017. He is the co-author with Forrest Church of *A Chosen Faith: An Introduction to Unitarian Universalism*, and author of many books.

- <https://www.uua.org/offices/people/john-buehrens>